



Elderly on outer of family bonus

By KYM MORGAN

AGED pensioners are still in desperate need of financial help despite receiving a one-off \$1400 Christmas bonus, the Council on the Ageing (COTA) says.

SA chief executive **Ian Yates** said many pensioners spent the money on debts or home maintenance, and were again struggling to make ends meet.

Mr Yates said COTA had received calls from pensioners frustrated at missing out on the latest \$42 billion economic stimulus plan, which would give one-off payments of up to \$950 to families and low and middle income earners.

"I think pensioners overall are having as much trouble coping as they were late last year before the bonus," he said.

"They have to keep making daily and weekly decisions on food, housing costs, transport, medical costs and things like their grandchildren, which are decisions they shouldn't have to be making in this day and age.

"We've just been through our second longest heatwave and



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Ian Yates

many (pensioners) were not using their airconditioning because they couldn't afford it."

Mr Yates said COTA would continue to campaign to raise the aged pension by \$100 a week, to \$381, with increases staggered over the next "couple of years".

He said if pensioners did not receive an increase in their fortnightly payments, they would be left in an "appalling position".

"Every quarter that goes

past, they're falling further and further behind."

Last October, a Messenger Community Newspapers survey of nearly 1200 pensioners revealed many were isolated and struggling financially, with nearly half eating fewer than three meals a day and 90 per cent spending less than \$25 a week on entertainment or activities.

Local Probus groups said a further bonus would have been appreciated but generally they understood the government's decision not to include pensioners in the latest stimulus package.

"The bonus we got certainly did help a lot of us," Glenelg South Combined Probus Club member and pensioner **Bill Jolley** said. "But I have to say that we have done very well. The new scheme looks very, very good."

Mr Jolley said about half of his club's 93 members were pensioners.

He thought most had spent about half of their Christmas bonus but had saved the other half for a tough year ahead.